

Application Ser. No. 09/531,743

AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS

1. (previously presented) A method of funneling user responses in a voice portal system to determine a desired item or service, the method comprising:
  - a) querying a user for an attribute value associated with a first particular attribute of the desired item or service; and
  - (b) determining if the attribute value given by the user satisfies an end state, an end state comprising a point at which the item or service is found, wherein if the end state is not satisfied, performing steps (a) and (b) by said voice portal with a further attribute of the item or service sought.
2. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, further comprising a step of assigning a user preference to the attribute value.
3. (previously presented) The method of claim 1, wherein querying a user for an attribute value associated with a first particular attribute of the desired item or service comprises:
  - prompting the user to supply an attribute value associated with the first particular attribute;
  - establishing an attribute vocabulary set related to the first particular attribute of the desired item or service; and
  - identifying the attribute value given by the user by comparing the attribute value with the attribute vocabulary set.
4. (previously presented) The method of claim 3, wherein the step of establishing an attribute vocabulary set comprises providing a group of possible verbal responses to a query on the first attribute.
5. (original) The method of claim 3, wherein the step of identifying the attribute value given by the user comprises providing fallback queries to query the user further for an attribute value which is in the attribute vocabulary set.

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6. (original) The method of claim 5, wherein the step of providing fallback queries comprises asking the user for at least one substitute attributes for the particular attribute of a desired item or service.
7. (original) The method of claim 3, wherein the step of identifying the attribute comprises setting a preference for the attribute.
8. (original) The method of claim 3, wherein the step of identifying the attribute comprises setting a global preference for the attribute, the global preference being applied to attributes in a plurality of domains of interest.
9. (previously presented) A system for funneling voice portal user responses to determine a desired item or service, the system comprising:
  - a user interface; and
  - a database coupled to the user interface, the user interface coordinating communications with a user, the database storing information regarding attributes, attribute vocabulary sets, and Internet-based information;
  - whereby the user interface
    - a) queries a user for an attribute value associated with a first particular attribute of the desired item or service; and
    - (b) determines if the attribute value given by the user satisfies an end state, an end state comprising a point at which the item or service is found, wherein if the end state is not satisfied, performing steps (a) and (b) by said voice portal with a further attribute of the item or service sought.
10. (original) The system of claim 9, wherein the user interface assigns a user preference to the attribute value.
11. (previously presented) The system of claim 9, wherein the user interface

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prompts the user to supply an attribute value associated with the first particular attribute;

establishes an attribute vocabulary set related to the first particular attribute of the desired item or service;

and identifies the attribute value given by the user by comparing the attribute value with the attribute vocabulary set.

12. (original) The system of claim 9, wherein the database stores preferences of the user.

13. (original) The system of claim 9, further comprising a customer management subsystem configured to store user related information.

14. (original) The system of claim 13, wherein the customer management subsystem records user responses to queries from the user interface.

15. (original) The system of claim 9, wherein the user interface communicates with a user using voice.

16. (original) The system of claim 9, wherein the user interface utilizes a wireless application protocol (WAP) platform.

17. (previously presented) A voice portal configured to funnel user responses to determine a desired item or service, the voice portal comprising:

means for performing the step of:

a) querying a user for an attribute value associated with a first particular attribute of the desired item or service; and means for performing the step of:

(b) determining if the attribute value given by the user satisfies an end state, an end state comprising a point at which the item or service is found, wherein if the end state is not satisfied, performing

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steps (a) and (b) by said voice portal with a new further particular attribute of the item or service sought.

18. (previously presented) The voice portal of claim 17, wherein the means for

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